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SAINT BERNARD

THE EDITOR

ALL over the world in this year of grace 1953 the figure of St Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, has stood out in great prominence. The immediate cause of this sudden limelight was the eighth centenary of his death; but a deeper reason must be sought in the fact that today men are turning to him and his Cistercian movement in a way that can hardly be equalled since the twelfth century in which he lived. He is the saint for today. It is surely more than a coincidence that the men of the U.S.A. are flocking to his standard in numbers as great as those of the saint's own lifetime. The unexpected popularity of the American Cistercian, Fr Thomas Merton, is not explained by the presence of an accomplished journalist within the silence-bound walls of Gethsemane Abbey, as though he happened there by accident. His own brethren have recognised the importance of this American Cistercian in asking him to write the preface to a monumental centenary volume of international composition.¹ Merton stands for a man of this present world who has turned to the simplicity of St Bernard for his salvation; and this modern world is searching with increasing desire for the simplicity of an ordered life in touch with the soil, with freedom of mind fostered by study and prayer and by the silence that binds a community in tranquil unity.

If we turn to the Abbot of Clairvaux we find a man who sought the retirement of the solitude of desert places but found himself in a short time helping to hold together a crumbling society by the power of that silence and solitude. Fr Merton in this preface gives some notion of that power. 'The founding of numerous monasteries, the elaboration of a theology penetrated by the love of God and by contemplation, an apostolate rich in charismatic graces, which embraced the whole world and aroused Christendom to a new realisa-

¹ *Bernard de Clairvaux. Préface de Thomas Merton.* Commission d'Histoire de l'Ordre de Cîteaux, Abbaye N.-D. d'Aiguebelle. (Editions Alsatia, Paris; pp. xxvi & 758, with plates, maps and sketches.)

tion of the divine mercy revealed in Jesus and Mary, all these works were in St Bernard the accidental expressions of a vocation substantially the same as that of St Paul. Bernard was sent by God "to complete the preaching of his word among you. This was the secret that had been hidden from all the ages and generations of the past; now, he has revealed it to his saints, wishing to make known the manifold splendour of his secret . . . Christ among you, your hope of glory." (Col. 1 : 25-6).⁷ This he achieved in particular through the Cross and through the Mother of God. The Cross he sought in his dynamic asceticism which cut through the crust of multiplicity in material things to the living Word beneath. That was why he went out into the desert, and having there been nailed to the Cross he found himself a sign on the mount of Calvary for the whole world.

The Cistercian movement in its search for the ascetic way of the Cross appears as a puritanical movement, but according to the true sense of the word. For St Stephen Harding was, for example, intent upon the *purity* of the texts of the Bible and of the chant used by the Cistercians in their prayer and study. St Bernard carried out in a general and paternal way this liturgical reform. He and his monks did not eschew the natural beauties of song and action in the worship of God like the later negative puritanical movements. He loved the chant and the liturgy; but he sought the true purity of song that avoided at once sophistication and rusticity, harshness and effeminacy. To obtain this true balance of heart, tongue and bodily action meant, as it still means, a veritable *via crucis*, the way of asceticism. (cf. pp. 150-64 of this volume.) In that first century of Cistercian vitality the great abbey churches were set up to be centres of an artistic purity which constantly strives to impregnate the work of men's hands with the beauty of the spirit, contemplation thus spreading out into human action reflecting the harmony of heaven in the beauty of human life, human work and in nature itself (cf. chapter 28 on St Bernard and the problem of art, pp. 487 *et seq.*). Fr Bede Jarrett in his sketch of St Aelred, who lived so directly under the impetus of Bernard, shows how the natural beauty of setting which we associate with the English Cistercian abbeys such as Rievaulx or Fountains was

induced in large measure by the work of the monks. They went out into the wilderness and turned the desert into a paradise (cf. *The English Way*: 'St Aelred of Rievaulx', by Bede Jarrett). And this was true of the whole Cistercian movement.

But this redemption of the world, this recapturing of divine beauty meant immense hardship and toil. That is why St Bernard is usually thought of as the fragile and pale ascetic, the vehement preacher of renunciation. The Cross, however, comes always, if it is redemptive, from the will of the Father; and the simple explanation of all this call to the ascetic life, to purity and integrity, is to be found in St Bernard's desire to take up 'the whole Rule and nothing but the Rule' of St Benedict (p. 60). Throughout this volume that theme is constantly recurring. 'The first Cistercians had no other end in view than to remain in their desert in order to find, by an exact fulfilment of the Rule, the direct union with God promised by St Benedict to the faithful disciple' (p. 178). St Bernard's poetic spirit, Cistercian architecture, the whole tone of the Cistercian life, all was formed under the inspiration of Benedict; so that the Father of monks was consciously the stem, as always however unconsciously, of every branch of religious life in the West. We need not bother our heads whether one branch or another holds the authentic interpretation of the Rule; we must, however, recognise the fact that the life-giving Cross of Christ has come down to us in large measure through the mediation of Benedict.

Bernard saw the positive side of the purity of Christ also in the figure of the Madonna. Desclée, de Brouwer have published a beautifully produced volume containing the Latin texts with French translations of all the main passages in his works dealing with our Lady.² St Bernard's 'life and work are of interest not only to the friends of the middle ages, but also to all those who are concerned with history, theology, philosophy, spirituality or the monastic life. And in one supreme point his influence is most universal and touches Christians most profoundly—his "Marial" spiri-

² *Saint Bernard et Notre Dame*. Etude d'âme, textes authentiques et traduction (Desclée de Brouwer. Abbaye de Sept-fons; n.p.)

tuality. For the Christian world Bernard is above all the Virgin's Minstrel.' The monks of Sept-fons Abbey thus introduce a fifty-page sketch of the influence of our Lady in the life of St Bernard and four hundred pages of texts. Our Lady's purity is no more an end in itself than the purity of the Rule and the Cross. These are the means of realising the purity of our Lord. 'Perhaps in him you tremble at the divine majesty, since although he be made man he still remains God. Do you look also for an advocate with him? Turn to Mary. In Mary indeed there lies pure humanity, pure not only from contamination, but pure also in singularity of nature. Without hesitation I insist: she herself will be heard "for her reverence"; the Son will undoubtedly listen to the Mother and the Father will listen to the Son.'" (p. 218.) These typical phrases, from his sermon on the 'Aqueduct', reveal the wholeness of his view which does not isolate our Lady from the picture of the redemption which has led man back to the Trinity. His poetic vision saw the whole divine action in the concrete, and in the concrete the Mother brought forth the only-begotten Son, the source and centre of all grace. We find the same inspiration in the writings of Aelred, Bernard's offspring, and in all the study and prayer of the monks who lived on 'our Lady's dowry'.

So it is today that we look back to the Cistercian inspiration in Christian life, but not with any desire to put the clock back, nor in a belief that all should strive to follow St Bernard into the cloister. The need for the simplicity of life bred in silence and on the soil, on liturgy and *lectio divina*, stirs in all our hearts in a way that it has not stirred since the time of St Bernard. In England we have not only the figure of St Aelred as our model, but we have the flourishing Abbeys of Mount St Bernard, Caldey and Stapehill. In Scotland and Ireland, too, these monks of Bernard exercise an increasing fascination for modern men from their country fastnesses. And in America the monasteries multiply as quickly as the Carmels under St Teresa, while their novitiates swell to an extent that would shock the Avilan saint with her conception of the small community. St Bernard is a fact in Christian life today, a fact that demands assimilation. We are not all to be Cistercians, but we should all look

back to our origins and forward to simplicity and a vital purity. All religious Orders, for example, should measure themselves, as St Bernard measured himself, against the Rule of St Benedict. All have sprung from that root, or at least eaten of the fruit of the Benedictine tree. Every Christian should discover his relation to nature and the land that give him life; he should recognise the present liturgical reform as Bernard recognised it in his day and fashioned his life upon it. St Bernard, says Fr Merton, sounded the depths of what he called the *magnum pietatis sacramentum*. 'This "sacrament" is the ineffable mystery of God's love for us. . . . The abbot of Clairvaux, in his life and in his theology, is the minister of this sacrament. Bernard's voice calls us once again to partake with him of "the blessings full of sweetness" which he has tasted. The power and authority, and the innocence of his voice lead us to thirst, as he thirsted, for the infinity of divine mercy. Following him we shall find, as he found, the treasure of divine love, hidden in the cleft of the rock. And with him we shall enter through this deep wound into that heart which is God's sanctuary.'



NOTICES and EXTRACTS will be resumed in the next issue
(December) of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT



FOR JANUARY 1954

The 'Life of the Spirit Conference' was held this year at Bishton Hall, Little Haywood, Stafford, from September 15th to 18th. The general subject was 'The Bible and the Spiritual Life' and the substance of the papers read will, it is hoped, be published in the January, 1954, issue. 'The Spiritual Sense' by Sebastian Bullough, O.P., 'Lectio Divina' by Bede Griffiths, O.S.B., 'The Bible and the Liturgy' by E. I. Watkin, 'The Images of the Bible' by Nicolette Gray, etc.

BEGINNING TO KNOW SAINT BERNARD

REFLECTIONS ON A MANUSCRIPT OF THE FIRST BIOGRAPHY

JOHN MORSON, O.C.R.

THE English Cistercians recently acquired a manuscript, copied in about 1200, of the first Life of St Bernard. It is a good specimen of the way in which the Life was distributed through the Cistercian and other monasteries of Europe in the decades following the saint's death and also shows the kind of difficulty which a small or newly-founded house may have had in setting up and maintaining its scriptorium. The codex is all the more valuable because it is headed by a miniature portrait of the saint executed probably when many who had seen him were still alive. The portrait from the first folio of the codex is reproduced, a little larger than actual size, in this issue. If any are interested in a more technical account of the MS. and its text they may hope to find it in two articles which have been sent to the Cistercians' quarterly *Collectanea*, devoted throughout this year to St Bernard. When the articles were written the author did not foresee that the codex would be lent through the French Embassy to the centenary Art Exhibition at Dijon. He is no longer in the secure position of a research-worker who has held on to his source and can say what he likes.

The portrait, even when seen in its original colours, may seem at first to tell us nothing of St Bernard's appearance. It has to be scrutinised by those who have an eye for detail, and can usefully be compared with others, from the earliest miniatures to better-known paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Then it appears as one of a family or even as an ancestor. It is difficult to believe that the artist had not reflected upon the description given in the text of the Life. The inward beauty of that man, said the secretary and companion who knew him so well, had to show itself outwardly. Yet the whole body was emaciated and frail to the last degree. The incapacity to digest food was described too vividly for translation. Only on the cheeks was the worn-out skin lightly tinged with red. Artists like ours took notice

of this and conscientiously dabbed on the most appropriate colour at their disposal. Whatever natural heat was in that body had been chilled by unending meditation and the pursuit of holy compunction. He could stand but little, was nearly always sitting and hardly ever moved. This seems to refer to the greater part of his monastic life and we hear at an early stage that he could no longer attend the choir office regularly. Yet the calls upon his charity from without were continual. Whenever he was free from them he prayed, read, wrote, taught and comforted his brethren, gave himself up to meditation. The biographer did not want this sustained attention to spiritual things to be thought something ordinary and normal in a Cistercian monk: for he insisted that only by a special grace did meditation never grow tedious, every place would do for it, every hour seemed too short. Going on to read of the saint's outward appearance we find that the hair was light yellow, the beard auburn and sprinkled with white in the later years. Bernard was moderately tall. For the hair and beard the portrait follows the directions as well as the available colours will allow. If a beard was shaved seven times a year as the usages required, or even less frequently for an abbot of frail constitution who had to travel in varying climates, plenty of hair would normally have appeared. The feature which was exaggerated to show a monk was the tonsure. At first our portrait gives the impression that there is a low mitre. Cistercian abbots never in fact had mitre or ring in the twelfth century and St Bernard strongly reproved abbots of any kind who hankered after them. The original with its colours shows more clearly than the photograph that there is nothing above the rather high ears and brow but the clean-shaven head surrounded by quite a mass of auburn hair. The surface has been damaged here, but we can see that the artist's equipment did not allow him to distinguish between the yellow of the hair and the auburn of the beard.

If readers have acquired *Bernard de Clairvaux*—a symposium published by the Cistercians' Historical Commission and mentioned elsewhere in this issue—they will have seen as frontispiece another miniature not much later than the one described. It is taken from the beginning of a copy of the

Sermons on the Canticle originating from the Cistercian monastery of Altzelle and now codex 375 in the University Library of Leipzig. It has been better preserved than the Mount Saint Bernard portrait, is larger and shows all details more clearly. Yet every feature hitherto described is there. A careful scrutiny of the two reveals that the nose is slightly hooked at the end. The artist, following the text of the *Life*, has been so careful to dab light red on the cheeks that the effect is rather absurd. On both portraits there is the halo behind the head. This would suggest a time later than the canonisation of 1174, even if the script and other considerations did not make this certain. On the Mount Saint Bernard portrait a hand is raised with the forefinger pointing to heaven, not to bless but to teach. The Altzelle conveys a similar idea for the free hand holds a book, presumably the Bible. MSB gives a standing, Altzelle a sitting position. There appear the sides and legs of a slightly ornate faldstool. This is just as in St Bernard's seal, made in 1151 and kept at the Rouen Museum. Oval in shape, it is surrounded by the words *Sigillum Bernardi Abbatis Clarevall*. It encloses the saint's effigy, but this makes no pretence of being a portrait.

Dress and insignia are too interesting to be disregarded. The figure on the seal is covered by the folds of a monastic cowl. But the two miniatures show St Bernard vested in a chasuble which, when left to hang, would have had the shape of a bell. No maniple appears. In MSB the orphrey, which forms a cross on the front, is of gold colour, as also the stole and footwear. The chasuble itself is blue, such as was used in Cistercian churches and elsewhere. Choice of colour on any day may well have been a matter of local usage or even of personal taste. Not even the Roman rite defined colours for days or seasons in the twelfth century: the Cistercian not until the seventeenth. St Bernard would never have departed from his Order's regulations so far as to wear vestments decorated with gold in his own church. The artist was simply making the most effective use of the few colours at his disposal and had no idea of giving historical instruction to twentieth-century students. Anyhow, a travelling abbot would have worn such ornate vestments as his guests might

provide. Some chasubles worn by St Bernard are still preserved and one may be seen this year at the Dijon exhibition.

The Alzelle illuminator had no gold, little else but red and yellow, variously combined and diluted. The chasuble is rose-coloured with a yellow orphrey.

Whether we look to the miniatures or to the seal we find no insignia proper to an abbot but the crozier, unless we also include the faldstool. The crozier always has the same form. The straight staff, coloured successively light and dark on the MSB, is headed by a round knob and from this arises the crook, in both miniatures ending in a trefoil.

It may be asked whether all this discussion stands in any relation to the heading of this article. Attention to the earliest representations of St Bernard carries us some way towards knowing him, is at least a beginning. Those scribes and illuminators were providing, perhaps, for child-like minds which would give first and longest attention to the picture. The biographer says characteristically that nothing which he can record will give us such a knowledge of St Bernard as the man's own writings. But he says too that the sermons read from a book (of these sermons the works very largely consist) can never give us anything but a poor idea of Bernard as he was to the listener. We cannot even be sure that we have the words actually spoken, for much was delivered on the inspiration of the moment, afterwards written down and polished up perhaps by someone else. In the sermons, treatises and letters, there is the always recurring question how much is due to a secretary. The letters are of the greatest value, but any one letter only shows how Bernard expressed himself in a particular context, how he dealt with one special problem. The Life then has a value quite its own.

Our critical spirit mistrusts medieval Lives. But the record here has quite an exceptional character. We owe most to Geoffrey of Auxerre, the saint's secretary and companion in the later years. First Geoffrey made scattered and rough notes on St Bernard's origin and youth, on miracles and other events at later stages. We see clearly just how far these were used in the biography. Those who turn for this to the last volume of Mabillon's *Opera Sancti Bernardi*, or to Migne P. L. 185, should remember that of the seven

books found under *Vita Prima* only the first five are the original work, also that the Life was meant to be handed on to us without those passages of a longer recension which are printed inside square brackets. The work was begun in the saint's own lifetime and without his knowledge. The monks of Clairvaux may well have felt that, to be above suspicion, the account must come from someone outside. William of St Thierry, though by this time a Cistercian monk of Signy, undertook the task, but, as he had expected, died before St Bernard. The next was Arnald, abbot of a black monastery named Bonneval. There is some indication, though no certainty, that he had become a monk of Clairvaux. When this second author died after doing only a little of the work, Geoffrey must have realised that the quickest and perhaps the only way to get something done was to do it himself. So he put into order his early rough notes, wrote three more books including the account of St Bernard's death and burial, then edited all that had been written as one work. We have extant some of Geoffrey's autograph, with his first alterations, as it was before the whole received the *Imprimatur* of an assembly of bishops and abbots in 1155.

In the first book by William we read what he had from outside sources, including Geoffrey's notes. Then we come to the point at which he met Bernard and became his friend. All at once the tone changes and the narrative is vivid. The state of Bernard's health had caused such alarm that he had been relieved of all responsibility at Clairvaux and sent to live in a little hut. Since the man in charge of his health had turned out to be no more than a quack, the abbot was on a diet which would have tested severely any man in perfect health and strength (an experience not of course confined to twelfth-century patients). William probably took the situation in hand. A year's rest and seclusion helped at least to prolong Bernard's life.¹

¹ We read in *The Dublin Review*, 1953, p. 109: 'For a whole year in his early manhood as abbot he was forced to live apart from his monks in a hut because his physical presence was unbearable in choir or at table'. This is in an admirable article by Dom David Knowles. But the first Life gives only the need of convalescence and the insistence of the Bishop of Châlons as reasons for the year in the hut. It seems clear that the writer of the article has confused Book I, chapter 7 (Mabillon's chapter division)

From beginning to end we have to allow for the panegyric style demanded by twelfth-century taste. Thus when in our own time there is published that full biography of Cardinal Hinsley which we await so eagerly we shall not expect to read: 'Comely olive, fruitful vine, flowering palm-tree, cedar multiplied . . . solid gold vessel adorned with every precious stone. . . . In thy presence every assembly shone as in sunlight: when thou didst depart it was shrouded in darkness.' Yet the paragraphs of this kind which popular enthusiasm called for in the first years were much cut down when Geoffrey made a revision some ten years later. The saint's limitations were freely admitted. It was a mistake to ruin his health in the first years of his monastic life. When he became an abbot he did not understand human nature and his preaching was unintelligible to most of his monks. His uncle and eldest brother, themselves in the community, felt that it was their responsibility to manage the young abbot. They told him not to be such a fool when he foretold cures and were even indignant when the cures took place. Geoffrey explains that this was only because they were so anxious that the abbot's humility should not be lost. Finally the uncle, having protested more strongly than ever against the miracles, fell so ill that he had to plead for Bernard's healing hand. From then on we do not hear of the subject's solicitude for their abbot's virtue. This superior of hundreds at Clairvaux, founder every year of new and distant monasteries, was not a temporal administrator. He said himself that he left everything in Gerard's hands and felt lost when Gerard died before him. Clairvaux was planned, enlarged and organised, with great efficiency. But those responsible had to argue with the abbot, to drag him round the regular places and show how it was a matter of urgent necessity, before he would allow them to go forward.

The Life has whole series of those miracles, so troublesome to the modern reader for whom laws of nature are never suspended. But Bernard was perplexed about the miracles and could not make out who was doing them. Geoffrey was almost apologetic in recording them and cut out

with chapter 8, where is explained the saint's absence from choir at a later time.

many in his last revision. Such hundreds were known that it was impossible to present a Life without giving specimens.

The work was not done for the future history research scholar. Chronology is not exact. Though considerable space has to be given to the journeys connected with the schism, little is to be learnt about the intricacies of the schism itself. We do not learn much either about the heretics of Languedoc. Hardly more than a passing mention is given to Peter Abelard or even to the second crusade. For the biographers these were the less important things. They wanted to try to tell us why when Bernard came a schism collapsed, when he opened his mouth heresy was silent, when he was at Clairvaux men flocked thither. They could say little more than that these things happened because he was Bernard. Or rather Bernard by himself did not explain such results any more than he accounted for cures and exorcisms. If any man sought to be poor and unknown it was this one who chose a monastery hitherto shunned and perishing with its founders. Such is the instrument which God sometimes uses. As Bernard said himself when he had cast out a devil: 'Was it surprising? We were two against one!'



ST AELRED AND THE ASSUMPTION

CHARLES DUMONT, O.C.R.

A NUMBER of things have been written of late on the opinion held by St Aelred on the Assumption of Mary. Since an unknown sermon of the saint, found recently and published by Dr C. H. Talbot, contains a decisive allusion to the point, it may be interesting to resume the discussion and set it against its true background. To those who have studied the sources likely to afford some evidence for the belief, the apparent hesitation of the Cistercians seems surprising, having due regard to their outstanding devotion to our Lady. A remarkable study by Fr E. Wellens of the

Abbey of Westmalle (Belgium), throws some light on the real situation.¹

To begin with, a charming legend told by Caesar of Heisterbach will explain the circumstances. 'In a monastery of our Order in Lombardy, there was a noble and well-educated monk named Bertram, who could no longer endure hearing doubts about the bodily assumption of Mary. After fifteen years of religious life, he came to his abbot on the vigil of that feast and declared: "Reverend Father, let me go today to our grange and allow me to stay there to-morrow". "And why do you ask me that?" said the abbot. "Because I could not bear to hear again either that homily of Jerome, or the sermon in Chapter." The abbot agreed and on his way the good monk had a vision which spoke to him thus: 'Bertram, you will hear better sermons than Jerome's here. I know well enough why you left the cloister today. Know then that I am glorified in both substances, body and soul'.²

Now the homily of Jerome referred to was read during the night office in Cistercian monasteries in the twelfth-century.³ In the fourth lection some doubts were raised and the suggestion was made that it was best not to decide anything about the bodily assumption rashly on one's own authority, but to consider it as merely an opinion. This sermon is known today to be apocryphal and is confidently attributed to Paschasius Radbertus, abbot of Corbie (d. 860). However, at the time the sermon was believed to be by Jerome and we can easily imagine the awkward position of the Cistercian abbot, who had to preach on the same subject two hours after the night office. He could scarcely contradict such an authority openly: who would dare to claim more light than St Jerome? In point of fact, all the great abbots, St Bernard among them, seem to have been extremely evasive and ambiguous.

¹ Eduard Wellens. *De Cisterciënserorde en de Tenhemelopneming van Maria*, in 'Citeaux in de Nederlanden', II (1951), pp. 1-20.

² Caesar of Heisterbach. *Dialogus miraculorum*, L. 7, c. 38. The story may have some connection with that of the lay brother of Clairvaux which occurs in *Exordium Magnum*, IV, 18.

³ The old Cistercian breviary is to be found in MS. Dijon 114, which was the prototype to be copied by all monasteries. The sermon of the pseudo-Jerome is printed in Migne P.L. 30, Col. 127-8.

It is therefore noteworthy that two English abbots explained the matter clearly and courageously to their monks. 'It is not at all easy', says Isaac of Stella, 'to find something really fitting to say on this feast. Confined as we are between the boundaries marked by the Fathers, we dare not define anything which would go beyond them. I dare but lay this down that, be it in body, be it in soul, I know not, God knows, Mary rose to the highest heavens.'⁴ A prudent phrase, no doubt, but at least clear and sincere. The argument of St Aelred of Rievaulx, is perhaps even more theologically precise. 'I should like to say, were I bold enough, that the Blessed Mother of God first left her body, and then in that body rose again to eternal life. And though I do not venture to affirm this since, should someone object, I have no authority to convince him, yet I dare to think so. I do however make bold to assert without doubt that today, whether in the body or out of the body, I know not, God knows, the Blessed Virgin went up to heaven.'⁵

The argument is very interesting, for it shows how clearly he distinguished between an assertion and an opinion, and felt the need of proof to meet opposition. We can imagine that every time the feast came round again the devoted abbot was exercised by his problem. But, at last, towards the end of his life, he found an argument of convenience. This is what he says: 'If Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord persecuted even the Lord himself, but afterwards received such mercy that he glorified in the hope of the sons of God's glory, and, whether in the body or out of the body was rapt even to the third heaven, there would be no cause for wonder if the Mother of God who, from the very cradle, remained with him in his temptations, should be assumed in her body into heaven and exalted above the choirs of angels.'⁶ It will be noticed that here St Aelred neatly turns the formula, 'whether in the body or out of the body', from a doubt, into a very persuasive convenience for the Assumption. His pro-

⁴ Sermon LI. P.L. 194, col. 1862.

⁵ Sermon XVIII. P.L. 195, col. 315b.

⁶ In Series Scriptorum S. Ordinis Cisterciensis, vol. 1, p. 162.

found christian feeling was stronger than the authority of a doubtful liturgical text.

The thirteenth century witnesses to a strong reaction in favour of the belief. It is not that the authenticity of the sermon attributed to Jerome is questioned as yet, but some breviaries merely ceased to include the offending passages. And what they lacked in modern critical scholarship they made up for in visionary insight.

Indeed another vision is to be found in the *Life of Abundus*, a monk of Villers-in-Brabant. 'While he was praying in that place he beheld the Spouse, she who is the comeliest among the daughters of Jerusalem, his faithful visitant, the Virgin Mary, suddenly standing there. She, calling him by his own name, said, 'Brother Abundus, my beloved, come here'. As he approached and greeted her reverently the most motherly one said to him, 'Hitherto, my dear, you have suffered anxiety in your heart on my account, wherefore I have thought it well to appear to you, bringing your heart joy and consolation. Although Jerome spoke of my assumption as an opinion, Augustine, who in one of his sermons roundly asserts my glorification in body and soul, gives a clear definition. Yet hear the true and certain explanation of the matter: My most holy Son was conceived of my pure flesh by the holy Ghost. If this be true, and true it is, it would have been unfitting that one part of my flesh should have been in heaven and the other on earth. It was plainly unfitting and unjust that after the body of my Son, and such a Son, had been raised up and glorified in heaven that the body of his mother, and such a mother, should lie in the tomb awaiting its arising until the general resurrection.' Having heard these things the visionary returned to himself and did not fail to give thanks to the Lord of all and his kindly Consoler for what had been revealed to him. Remembering, however, the words of the Blessed Virgin where she had said that Augustine had borne sure witness to her Assumption, he enquired about it of a certain preacher, learned in many things, but he, afraid to affirm what he had never read, took the question off to the masters at Paris.'

⁷ The *Vita Abundi* is in the unpublished MS. 19525 of the Bibliothèque Royale de Bruxelles, fol. 17.

For his inability to find the text of Augustine quoted in the vision, the good Friar deserved forgiveness and even congratulations, since this was probably an allusion to another apocryphal work falsely attributed to St Augustine. It may be remarked that Thomas of Cantimpré reports a similar vision⁸ and points out the opposition between Augustine and Jerome, but owing to his close connection with the Cistercians, he may have been borrowing from Caesar of Heisterbach.

There are many other signs of the slow but sure reaction in the first half of the thirteenth century. We shall quote here only two English Cistercian abbots well known for their literary works. The following is a prose translation of some verses of Roger of Ford (d. 1214) on our Lady: 'The bearing of her body to the stars witnesses to its rest in everlasting peace, that flesh of which God himself willed to be born. Should one so dear be given as food for worms? Should the temple of virtues, the noble house of God, putrify and be subject to corruption? A number of reasons could be brought to bear on the question, but I hold my peace since you, beloved doctor, admonish me to do so.'⁹ The 'beloved doctor' of the last line may have been Baldwin of Ford, who prudently advised Roger not to insist overmuch on the subject of the Assumption. Again, in his 'Meditations', one of the earliest examples of what will later become the Rosary, Stephen of Salley invites us to meditate on the entry of Mary into heaven 'in her true flesh, virginal, glorified'.¹⁰ The faith and devotion of the Cistercians was evidently not to be discouraged by that problematic sermon.

Peter Abelard attributes to St Bernard, among other things, the fact that the Order of Cîteaux consecrates its churches to our Lady,¹¹ and we know from a letter of Peter

⁸ *Bonum universale de apibus*, Lib. II, 30, No. 11.

⁹ *The Verses of Roger of Ford on Our Lady*, ed. C. H. Talbot, in *Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensis Reformatorum*, VI, 1939. p. 53.

¹⁰ *Les Meditations d'Etienne de Sallai*, ed. A. Wilmart, in *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, X, 1929. See 15a Meditatio, p. 411, and 15um gaudium, p. 413.

¹¹ P.L. 178, col. 339.

of Celles,¹² that this decision of the General Chapter¹³ was emphasised by St Bernard's personal devotion. Now, this dedication was made to the Assumption of Mary, Queen of heaven and earth. The title 'Queen of heaven and earth' is significant. Far from being a passing fashion, this devotion was deeply rooted in Cistercian spirituality. The full eschatological meaning of resurrection was closely linked with the spiritual meaning of the Gospel of the day, of Martha and of Mary. The twofold life, which the Virgin Mary led, caring for her Son and meditating on his mysteries, finds in the Assumption its full accomplishment.¹⁴ Action and contemplation, bodily and spiritual ascesis are glorified, and the monk, practising both lives, contemplates in the Assumption the future for which he longs. However, since a bare fact may seem more telling than visions and theological reflections, we shall close with an entry in an English Chronicle. 'At the Cistercian abbey of Coggeshall (Essex), the high altar was consecrated by Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London, in honour of the glorious Virgin Mary and of St John the Baptist, on the feast of the Assumption'.¹⁵ This is the first mention we have of such a dedication in the Order. As this event took place in 1167, we may well guess that Gilbert Foliot remembered during the High Mass his friend, Aelred of Rievaulx, a convinced believer in the Assumption, who had died a few months earlier.

¹² P.L. 202, col. 618.

¹³ *Instituta Capituli Generalis*, No. XVIII.

¹⁴ cf. Aelred of Rievaulx, P.L. 195, col. 307a.

¹⁵ Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, anno 1167.

MARTHA AND MARY

ST AELRED OF RIEVAULX¹

IN one of the castles Jesus entered during his journey, a woman called Martha entertained him in her house. She had a sister called Mary. You have heard from the gospel the great happiness of the two women. Truly, great happiness was Martha's who received such a guest, who waited upon him and was busy in his service. Great happiness was Mary's who recognised the excellence of her guest, who heard his words and tasted his sweetness. The gospel narrates that our Lord Jesus Christ entered one of the castles and a woman called Martha entertained him in her house. She had a sister called Mary who ran to Jesus when he entered and sat down at his feet listening to his words. So closely did she attend to the words of the Lord that she took no heed of anything in the house, not even how much her sister was labouring. Which one of us, if our Lord were on earth and wished to come to us, would not greatly rejoice? Should we despair of his coming just because he is not bodily on earth and we cannot receive him in human form? Let us prepare our houses and he will come to us at our work in a better way than if he came bodily. These women surely were blessed who received him corporally but more blessed are they who receive him in their hearts. At that time there were many who received him, ate and drank with him, but because they did not receive him into their hearts they remained miserable. Who was unhappier than Judas? And he served the Lord in human form. I shall say even more. The blessed Virgin Mary herself whose glorious assumption we celebrate today certainly was blessed because she received the Son of God in her body. But she was even more blessed because she received him into her heart.

Yesterday we read how a woman said to our Lord: Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breast which thou hast

¹ Translated by Sister Rose de Lima, of Seton Hill College, Pennsylvania, from *thae sermons in Migne P.L.* 95, cols. 303-9. The Latin department of Seton Mill College is projecting the English translation of the works of St Aelred.

sucked. And he answered, Shall we not say, Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it? Therefore, let us prepare a spiritual castle that our Lord may come to us. I speak boldly, for unless the blessed Mary had prepared this castle in herself the Lord Jesus would not have entered her womb or her heart and this gospel would not be read on this feast today.² Let us fortify this castle, then, with three things: a moat, a wall, and a tower. First a moat, afterwards a wall beside it, and then a tower, the most important of the three. The wall and moat protect each other; for unless a moat is present men may approach and undermine the wall, and if the wall is not there they may fill the moat. The tower guards everything because it is higher than anything else.

Let us now enter our soul and see how these things should be accomplished spiritually in us. What is the moat unless deep earth? Therefore, let us dig our heart where the earth is deepest. Let us carry away the earth within, which is our human frailty, and cast it up to make a moat. Let us not hide it within, but let it be always before our eyes as a moat of deep earth in our hearts. That moat is humility. Let us recall what the vinedresser in the gospel said concerning the tree which the lord of the vineyard wished to be cut down: Sir, let it be this year too, so that I may have time to dig and put dung round it. He wished to dig a ditch, that is, to teach humility. So let us begin to build this castle. For unless there is first a moat in our heart, that is, true humility, we shall build nothing, but heap ruins upon our own head. How well the blessed Mary made this moat for herself! Surely she considered more her own frailty than all her dignity and holiness. She knew that of herself she was frail; and that only by the grace of God was she holy, was she the Mother of God, the mistress of angels, the temple of the Holy Spirit. She humbly confessed what she was of herself: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done unto me according to thy word. And again: He has looked graciously upon the lowliness of his handmaid.

After a moat we ought to make a wall. That spiritual wall is chastity—a strong wall, which keeps the flesh clean and

² The new Mass of the Assumption (*Signum magnum*) has a different gospel—that of the Visitation, Luke 1, 41-50.

inviolable. That is the wall which guards the moat so that it cannot be filled by the enemy. If anyone loses chastity, at once his heart is filled with filth and uncleanness, so that humility, the spiritual moat, is altogether destroyed. Just as the moat is guarded by the wall, so is it necessary that the wall be guarded by the moat. For whoever loses humility of heart cannot guard the chastity of his flesh. And so it sometimes happens that virginity preserved from childhood is lost in later life. Holy Mary more perfectly than any other preserved that wall, for she was the holy virgin inviolable, whose strong wall of virginity could not be pierced by any temptation of Satan. She was a virgin before giving birth, a virgin in giving birth, and a virgin after giving birth.

If you are imitating the most blessed Mary and have this moat of humility and this wall of chastity, you must now build the great tower of charity. Just as the tower is wont to be higher than all the other buildings of the castle, so charity is above all the other virtues in the spiritual edifice of the soul. Therefore says the apostle: I show you a way which is better than any other. He said this of charity, the better way, which leads to eternal life. Those within that tower do not fear the enemy because love drives out fear when it is perfect love. Yet he who has the firm wall of chastity but does not possess the high tower of charity, either because he contemns and judges his brother or because he fails to show him the charity he should, that man allows the enemy to pierce the wall and kill his soul. Similarly, if he appears humble in his habits and life, and yet within is bitter towards his superiors and companions, the moat of humility cannot protect him from his enemies. Who can say how perfectly the most blessed Virgin built that tower? If Peter loved his Lord, how much more did the blessed Virgin love the Lord, her Son? The Lord himself has deigned to show by many miracles and visions how much she loves all mankind and prays to her Son for the whole human race.

It is futile for me even to try to show you her charity. She is so great that no mind is capable of conceiving her. She is surely that castle into which Jesus deigned to enter. And without doubt they are happier who receive him spiritually into such a castle than many who received him into

their homes during his lifetime on earth. But why is it that Jesus entered into one of the castles? One signifies singularity and this property pertains to our most blessed Lady. She is a singular castle because in no one else is there such profound humility, such perfect chastity, such excellent charity. She is the singular castle which the Father created, the Holy Spirit sanctified, and the Son entered; which the whole Trinity as a single guest has chosen. She is that castle into which Jesus entered. The gate was closed when he entered and it was closed when he left. As the prophet Ezechiel said: He led me to the gate which looketh towards the East and it was closed.³ The gate of the East is the most holy Mary, for the gate facing the East is the first to receive the sun of charity. Thus the most blessed Mary who always looked towards the East, that is, toward the brightness of God, first received a ray of light in her, as the prophet Zachary said: He has come to us like a dawning from on high. This gate was closed and well fortified. The enemy found no access, no opening at all. It was closed and sealed with the seal of chastity, which was not violated by the entrance of the Lord. Rather was it strengthened and fortified all the more by the presence of him whose gift is virginity. Into this castle Jesus entered. And if we have in us this spiritual castle he will also come to us in a spiritual way. In the blessed Mary he entered not only spiritually but also corporally, because in her and from her he assumed a body. A woman called Martha entertained him in her house and she had a sister called Mary.

If our soul has become the castle we have described it is necessary that two women live in it: one to sit at Jesus's feet that she may hear his words, the other to wait on him that he may eat. If Mary alone is in that house there would be no one to feed the Lord. Therefore, Martha signifies that action by which man labours for Christ. Mary, however, signifies that rest by which man, freed from corporal works, delights in the sweetness of God through reading, prayer, and contemplation. As long as Christ is poor and walks on the earth, hungry, thirsty, and tempted, both these women must live in one house, that is, both these actions must be

³ Ezechiel 44, 1 (Douay translation). Knox has: Then he brought me back to the eastern gate of the outer precincts, that was fast shut.

performed in the same soul. As long as you are on earth, and I, and others, he is on earth, for we are his members. As long as they who are members of Christ suffer hunger, thirst, and temptation so long does Christ suffer hunger, thirst, and temptation. Therefore, he shall say on the day of judgment: When you did it to one of the least of my brethren here, you did it to me. So it is necessary in this miserable, laborious life that Martha be in our house, that is, that our soul be zealous for corporal works. As long as we must eat and drink, so long must we curb the flesh by watches, fasts, and bodily labours. This is Martha's part. Mary must also be in our soul, that is, in spiritual works. For we should not always be intent upon corporal exercises. Sometimes we should be free to taste and prove how gracious is the Lord; to sit at Jesus's feet and listen to his words. In no way should you neglect Mary on account of Martha, nor Martha on account of Mary. For if you neglect Martha, who will feed Jesus? If you neglect Mary, what does it matter that Jesus entered your house, when you taste nothing of his sweetness?

Know, then, that never in this life should these women be separated. When Jesus will no longer be poor or hungry or thirsty or tempted, then Mary alone will occupy the whole house or our soul. Saint Benedict understood this, or rather the Holy Spirit in Saint Benedict. He did not determine that we should be intent about Mary's contemplation and overlook Martha's labour, but he commended both to us and allotted certain times for the work of each.⁴ These two actions existed perfectly in our Lady. She bathed our Lord and fed him, carried him in her arms and fled with him into Egypt. All this pertains to corporal action. She meditated on his divinity, contemplated his power, and tasted his sweetness while she kept all his words in her heart. All this pertains to Mary. How beautifully the gospel says: Mary took her place at the Lord's feet and listened to his words. In accordance with Martha's role, the blessed Mary did not sit at Jesus's feet. Why rather, as I think, the Lord Jesus himself was sitting at the feet of his sweet mother. For, as the gospel says, he lived in subjection to them, that is, to Mary and

⁴ e.g. *De Hebdomadario Lectore* and *De Opera Manuum Cotidiana* (Wöflin, *Regula*, 38 and 48).

Joseph. Inasmuch as she saw and knew his divinity, she sat at his feet because she humbled herself before him and considered herself his handmaid. In the role of Martha, she ministered to him as to one weak and little, hungry and thirsty. She grieved in his passion, in the insults which the Jews committed against him. Jesus answered her: Martha, Martha, how many cares and troubles thou hast! In the role of Mary, she supplicated the Lord, she worshipped him, she longed for his spiritual sweetness. As for us, as long as we are in this body in this exile, in this place of penance, let us know that what the Lord said to Adam: Thou shalt earn thy bread with the sweat of thy brow, is more proper and natural to us. This pertains to Martha. Whatever we taste of spiritual sweetness is nothing else than a certain pittance by which God sustains our weakness. Therefore, let us do carefully those things which are Martha's, and with all care and fear let us perform those things which are Mary's. Never let us dismiss part of one for part of the other. Sometimes it will happen that Martha will wish to have Mary in her labour, but this is not to be granted to her. And she said: Lord, art thou content that my sister should leave me to do the serving alone? Come, bid her help me. This is a temptation.

It sometimes happens that when we are free for reading or prayer, our thoughts suggest to us that we should go to work. In a certain sense, Martha is calling Mary to help her, but the Lord judges justly and well. He does not order Martha to sit with Mary, nor does he order Mary to rise and serve with Martha. Altogether better and sweeter and dearer is the part of Mary. Nevertheless, he does not wish that Martha's work should be dismissed on Mary's account. The part of Martha is more laborious, yet he does not wish Mary's rest to be disturbed. He wishes that each act her own part. But those who think that some should be Marthas and some should be Marys are making a mistake and do not understand aright. Both these women live in one castle, in one house; both are pleasing and acceptable to the Lord, both beloved by the Lord, as the gospel says: Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus. Let them tell us which of the holy Fathers reached perfection without both these actions. But because both these roles must be played by each

one, at certain times we should do those things which are Martha's; at other times, those things which are Mary's, except in the case of necessity which knows no law. We must, therefore, keep those times carefully which the Holy Spirit has fixed for us. At the time of reading we should be calm and quiet, sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to his words. At the time of labour let us be active and alert, not omitting in any way the service of truth through the plea of quiet. Let us never mingle these two unless by obedience, which we ought to prefer above all quiet or labour or anything else. Surely Mary had the sweeter part—to sit at the feet of Jesus. Nevertheless, if the Lord had ordered her, she would have risen without any hesitation and served with her sister. But the Lord, in order to commend both actions, did not command it. So let us be careful, if it is not otherwise commanded us, that we always guard these two things carefully and not give up one for the other.

We ought to consider what the Lord said: Mary hath chosen for herself the best part of all, that which shall never be taken away from her. The Lord gives us great consolation in these words. The part of Martha will be taken away from us, but not the part of Mary. Who would not loathe those labours and toils if they were to be with us always? Therefore the Lord consoles us. Let us act manfully and perform those labours and toils, knowing that they have an end. On the other hand, who would care much for those spiritual consolations if they were only to last for a lifetime? But the part of Mary will never be taken away from us; it will even be increased. What we here begin to taste in minute drops, after this life we shall drink even unto inebriation, as the prophet says: Their senses will be ravished with the treasure of thy house; thou wilt bid them drink deep at thy fountain of contentment. Therefore, let us not be overcome by these labours, because they will be taken away from us. But let us avidly desire the taste of divine sweetness. Here indeed it begins but after this life it will be perfected in us and will remain in us forever. And the blessed Mary will help us attain to this beatitude with her Son our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, world without end. Amen.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME . . .

BY R. H. J. STEUART, S.J.

HALLOWED be thy name. Hallowed—a Saxon word meaning ‘Blessed, honourable, held holy’. May thy name then be blessed: may it be held holy: may it be adored. Our prayer should not be all prayer of petition, all self-regarding; we should have some prayer of adoration, prayer just about God. The book of the Apocalypse gives us a description of this kind of prayer where it says, ‘And there was silence in heaven for about the space of half-an-hour’. Is there enough of this prayer in my life? This is the one thing necessary.

‘Be still and know that I am God.’

God commends Mary because she had chosen the better part—silent adoration at her Master’s feet, with her mind full of him. We must realise that the prayer which brings us closest to God is that in which we forget, for the time being, all except God. I should season my prayer every now and again with this, the best form of prayer, just silent adoration; hallowing his holy name, his holiness.

‘Adoro te devote, latens deitas.’

We know God most when we know it least. I want God not for something that *I* want, but for something that he wants, i.e. for himself. I want to aim at so adoring him; to ask nothing for self, but just to know that I am adoring him. God is supremely adorable; God is supremely to be admired, appreciated.

It is so simple to say, ‘Hallowed be thy name’. Repeat it often. Thus therefore shalt thou pray—thus think of God; just simple adoration. Try it. Think, then stop for a moment. Hold yourself in adoration before God. Say: ‘I know that God is my God’, and then stay adoring him.

So I pray that God’s will should be done; and his will is that his name should be hallowed.
triumphant.

‘Thy kingdom come’—that the law of God should be

I am to pray for this?—but it is here already, whether I pray for it or not. God is *the* autocrat, *the* absolute monarch,

our King. God is in every sense absolute, so absolute that we have no words with which to express it. 'Thy will be done'—it is done; and yet I am to ask that it may be done. 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done': nothing in the Our Father so accentuates God's attitude towards us, and ours to him. We pray that he may be recognised as King by us and by all men; we pray that his kingdom may be established, that he should triumph, that he should reign.

Our Lord wants me in this petition to state my desire for the extension of his kingdom; thus I pray that God will make me more and more his real subject. It means that I want God's will to be done more and more; I want this over and above everything else, no matter what it costs. To live the Christian scheme of life the attitude needed demands heroism. We must keep the ideal before us and work steadily to it; the ideal is that God may reign in your heart. 'Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is fit for the kingdom of heaven.'

'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' What is his will? There is no sign, no indication. When I say I want God's will to be done, I mean I want to know for myself what God's will is for me. Silence! Utter silence! And yet I have to ask for the grace always to do God's will. What is his will?

Is there anything in Christ's life that will enlighten us? When God became man, what sort of man did he become? Had we been asked beforehand what sort of man he would be, we should have made some magnificent sort of concoction. But God does the infinitely perfect thing: and what did he do? He became an ordinary average man. There is nothing in the Gospels to say that the Holy Family were very poor. I think the whole point is lost if we try to represent Nazareth in that way. Jesus could not be everything. He belonged to one particular class, an artisan. God became man and remained so for thirty years, making no sort of mark or trace on human history. He was God upon earth, living as a man, really man but really God, for thirty years, and no one did anything about it, nothing happened. True God of true God, for thirty years! At the end of thirty years,

God the Father spoke from heaven at the baptism by John the Baptist and said, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'.

What was he pleased with? What had God the Son done to satisfy God in this life of his, which was just like everybody else's life? Well, what did our Lord say? 'My meat—that by which I live—is to do the will of him who sent me.' And again, 'I do always the things that please him'. It means that nothing in itself is of any value, but all the value of anything and everything is that degree of our will to do his will that it contains. My accomplishments may be distinguished or not; it doesn't matter, if only I mean to do God's will.

Christ has shown us that he did the ordinary things of life and did them in that light. There was not a thing that Christ did that did not collate with God's will, and he was truly man as he was truly God, and therefore it was a real man who was doing it. He was our model.

So here we are, in the Lord's Prayer, instructed, advised, induced by Christ to aim at and ask from God one thing, namely, devotion to his will, even now in this life, as perfect as it will be in heaven. How am I going to do that? It is so easy to talk! Is there a catch somewhere? It seems to me that that is the real significance of 'Thy will be done'—that God should give us grace to want to do his will. If an angel asked you if you wanted God's will to be done, you would say, 'Of course I do!' But do you want it as an artist wants success in his art? Is it a sort of passion with you? That is what our Lord puts before us, to put it above all things. How are we going to arrive at that?

Supposing you want something—say a watch; you have plenty of money and you ask how much it is, but you find it is twice as much as you intended to pay. You don't want it all that much. You go to a certain length in pursuit of some object, but no further because you don't want it as much as that. Now, what we pray is that God will give us such a desire to do his will that we will submit to anything for it. 'As it is in heaven.' We ought to ask of God as the first thing, before all things, that he would give us grace, that he will inspire us to want what he wants just because he

wants it and for no other reason. The difficulty is that we have all sorts of wants and desires, all good ones, maybe, none of them opposed to God. 'Holy' comes from the same root as 'whole-ly'. A holy person is a complete person, and that is what a saint is, one who is 'wholly' given to God. Not that everybody is bound to reach heroic sanctity; but everyone is equipped to be a saint. There is all the apparatus ready.

Behind will is love. Will is the extent of love. I want to go for a walk because I love going for a walk; I want to read or play because I love it. Therefore this adherence of my will to God's will is simply another way of putting my love of God. I shall never bring myself to an overmastering desire that God's will should be done by meditating about his omnipotence, power, authority; I can't attain it that way. Will is a function of love, as sight is to the eye, and therefore we must begin by *loving* God. Our Lord gives us as the first and greatest commandment: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, mind, soul and strength'—with the whole of yourself. That is why you are made as you are made, with all the faculties you have. The end of them all is that you may love God.

So St Paul on charity—*caritas*—love of God. 'Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' I'm making a noise, a blare, a jangle, but that is all, just like someone banging a tin can about. There we are brought up standing with the downright declaration of St Paul, that no matter what you do, nothing is any use to God unless it is the expression of our love of him. We have got to face that fact, there is no getting away from it. So far from being exceptional, it is the first step which is going to give any meaning, value, significance to what we do.

Only through love of God are we going to reach that

desire which will overwhelm us, to the exclusion of everything else, that God's will shall be done. It is within the reach of us all. If it were not, God would not be just to us.

How is it possible for us to love God before all things? How can I honestly say I am going to? I say, 'I love God', but do I mean it? Perhaps it does not mean 'love' in the ordinary sense of the word, but just putting his interests first, and not an emotional love, giving out from the heart? Is there any escape that way? No, because when our Lord said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart', etc., he added, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. So it is the same love, and therefore all of us are created for it, and therefore it must be possible for us.

But how am I going to say I love God as well as I love my friends? It is not a fair question, because I mustn't bring God down to earth and compare him with creatures. What is quite certain is that the more I love God the more I love everything else. God is not another person competing for my love. We've all got to love God, and I will add that we all *can* love God, and we all *do* love God—more than we know.

We all can. In baptism the three theological virtues are infused into our souls: Faith, Hope, Charity. So because I am baptised I am able, at will, to make an act of love of God which in God's eyes is really an act of love, even though to me it is accompanied by no emotional reaction. St Paul said, whatever you do, however noble, is nothing, nothing, nothing, and less than nothing, if the love of God does not lie in you. And he meant the absolute necessity of the love of God.

But then I want to *know* the love of God—not merely as speculative fact. I don't believe I shall be able to live a Christian life, to keep that going, merely on the intellectual assurance that I love God. But if I keep on making acts of love—a habit of it—doesn't it seem reasonably likely that I shall grow to a real sensible love of God?

People pick up things by constant repetition; so shall we. 'I love you.' It begins to react and I begin to feel it is more than a few words and I recognise it as a thing essentially my own. I think that we all love God vastly more than we

dare to give ourselves credit for. Are you going to tell me that we submit to the discipline of our religion, that we give ourselves endless labour to do things we don't like—are you going to tell me that you do that simply because of the fear of hell? I think it would be an impossibility. Then why do you do it? If I have the love of God, the desire that his will shall be done, then all things flow from it. It must be a sort of passion.

We have the experience of the saints—the furnace of the love of God. If only I will have faith and trust and persevere in acts of love, it must turn back to myself, flow back into my soul as a warmth, reflecting God's love into my own consciousness, filling the whole of me, giving me a closer union, a sort of identification with the One loved. This act of the love of God is in the hands of everybody. It is not a sort of museum-piece as so many people think. It is in the hands of every little child. If we want to give all we can give, he will make it possible for us to do so.

NOTICE

The first reactions to *LIFE AND WORK OF MOTHER M. ST IGNATIUS* by a Religious of Jesus and Mary (Clonmore and Reynolds; 15s.) may lead one to exclaim on the multiplicity of educational congregations founded by holy Frenchwomen of the last century. The reader may turn to the chapter that describes how attempts were made in 1834 to amalgamate the new institution formed by Mdlle Claudin Thevenet with the religious of the Sacred Heart who seemed to have already the same ideals and the same kind of life. He may at first heartily sympathise with the desire to obviate unnecessary multiplicity. Yet as he reads of the great work of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary as it gradually spread to India, Canada, the United States, England, he will begin to understand that all these congregations have their own character and together form an Order after the pattern of the Monastic Order which is comprised of separate, independent monastic institutions, formed by the same general monastic inspiration. No sensible man would insist that Downside and Ampleforth should be run by a single organisation. The Church gains by the individuality of these independent foundations, and the desire for amalgamation may sometimes be inspired by a hankering for uniformity which is only a mechanical form of unity. May these nineteenth-century French foundresses of educational establishments prosper, progress and reign in the success of their holy lives and their holy institutions.

A FORERUNNER OF ST JOHN OF THE CROSS¹

D.A.B.

THE Golden Age of Spanish Spiritual Theology flowered suddenly, almost as though a summer were to burst upon us without a springtide. Not that Spaniards were ignorant of the subject, either in theory or in practice, but previous to the middle of the fifteenth century they produced scarcely any native writers. The mediæval period proper was one of importation and imitation. Works of foreign authorship were translated, and Spain was long content to draw upon the common heritage of Western Christendom, for her mystical as for her dogmatic theology. Then, roughly half-way through the century, there begins a long line of Spanish writers who have assimilated the masterpieces of other lands, whether in the original or in translation, and are becoming increasingly original, until we reach peak point with St Teresa and St John of the Cross.

However, just because they are themselves, the impression is easily gained that not only was each of these an outstanding genius—as was the case—but that they were more or less entirely independent investigators, owing little or nothing to those who had gone before them. Especially is this the case with regard to St John. Nevertheless, he owed much to his predecessors, even although his own contribution to the subject was to be so outstanding as, one day, to win him the title of a Doctor of the Church.

But if Spain produced no earlier spiritual writers of the calibre of the Victorines, no 'school' of mystics comparable to that fascinating group from the Rhineland and the Low Countries, she venerated and used them all, and St John was as the rest of his fellow countrymen. Not the least important influence upon him was that of the Dominican, Tauler, 'the Enlightened Doctor', whom we know he studied, both from the evidence of his disciples and from

¹ The following article is part of a larger work to be published in the near future by Messrs Burns and Oates.

the internal evidence of his own works. A rather free Latin translation of the eighty-three Sermons which, together with a single letter, are the only extant authentic works of the great German friar, had been made by the Carthusian, Lawrence Surius, in 1548 and was much appreciated in Spain. The so-called *Institutions* of Tauler are merely a compilation made by others, one of whom was probably 'Peter of Nijmegen' (St Peter Canisius), and from them St John borrowed, though they contain more of Ruysbroeck and Eckhart than of Tauler.

The last-named is surely one of the most attractive of mystics. It is impossible to read his sermons without carrying away the impression of a saintly priest and religious, steeped in the spirit of his Order, a gentle, genial person who could yet be very uncompromising when necessary, and one who had personal experience of God's ways with souls, as learnt in his own case and in those of others. He possesses an insight into human nature not inferior to that of the Mystical Doctor himself; his style is often sheer beauty, whilst his homely illustrations and sense of humour are additional attractions.

A Rhinelander, he obviously liked to walk by the riverside and watch the shipping, and he likens a fervent, steadfast soul to 'a ship well loaded with thoughts of the Beloved and devout works, so that her rudder is deep down in the water'—hence she steers well—'and wafted along by the wind of love, which is driving her homeward unto the Godhead, all prosperously and according to her longing desires'. Again: 'There are souls who make as much of small trials as though the Rhine were overflowing through their house'. Elsewhere, the spiritually slothful are likened to 'good-for-nothing hounds, who care nothing for the hunt, but lag behind the rest of the pack and stray away'.

He was born at Strasbourg, probably about 1304, of well-to-do parents, and entered the Dominican priory there sometime between his fifteenth and twentieth birthdays. He was fervent, loved the observance, and was most anxious to 'do everything'; but he tells us he was delicate and, at least in his student years, had to accept dispensations which were a sore trial. (No credit is to be attached to the story of his 'conversion' by a layman. All the facts are against it, and

obviously no conversion in the sense there related was ever needed.) He was sent to the *Studium Generale* at Cologne, and probably returned to Strasbourg afterwards. What is certain is that by 1336 he was already known as an outstanding preacher and spiritual guide, and had much to do with the Dominican nuns, who were instructed and directed by some of the most learned friars in the Province. He lived later at Cologne and for some time at Bâle, where he was associated with the confraternity known as 'the Friends of God'. He probably refers to this sojourn when he tells his congregation at Cologne that he was 'once in a country where the laity are so devout and steadfast that the word of God produces more fruit there in a year than it does at Cologne in ten!' However, he commends the latter city for its devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the practice of frequent Communion, of which latter he was a strong advocate. He died at Strasbourg in 1361.

Space forbids an extensive treatment of his teaching, but a few quotations may be given, as being typically representative and inviting comparison with St John of the Cross. For this reason they are all concerned with the spiritual life and prayer.

He assumes that beginners will use meditation of some kind, especially upon the life and passion of our Lord, but he allows great liberty of spirit. 'Remember that all are not able to pray wholly with spiritual acts of the mind; for many must pray with words. Pray as thou canst . . . then when thou findest any manner of prayer very productive of devotion . . . keep to that, whether it be the sorrowful thought of thy sins, or anything else whatever. Ask of God that prayer which pleases him best, and will serve thy soul's best interests. After having done that, accept whatever devout thoughts are before thee, whether they be of the Godhead simply, of the Blessed Trinity or of the sufferings of Christ.' Beginners should not reject sensible devotion, for it has its purpose, nor should they banish images, i.e. the use of the imagination, prematurely. Tauler inveighs against a plethora of private devotions and vocal prayers, however, when such are not of obligation. 'External and showy exercises of religion prevail greatly nowadays', he remarks—drily, we

feel sure! Nor does he approve of elaborate methods, which were creeping in at his period.

His teaching on detachment and self-abnegation is precisely that of the Carmelite. Hand in hand with prayer goes progressive purifying of one's intention. God must be sought, not the consolations of God; God, and not our thoughts of him. 'The true and faithful servant of God goes ever onward, consolation or no consolation, pleasure or pain, plenty or want, ever straight forward, through all these things, to God's own self.' 'The soul must strive to become a saint for God's sake, and in the degree of sanctity he decrees for it.'

As the soul progresses, its prayer simplifies, and we have the prayer of 'loving attention' of St John of the Cross, later to be known as acquired contemplation. When meditation and the affective prayer which develops from it have done their work, the soul desires 'to betake itself to prayer like a man with water before him, and drinks sweetly without effort, without the need of drawing through the channel of previous reflections, forms and figures. When thou art aware of this drawing, let no pious method or practice of thy own devising hold thee back, but without form or image, yield thyself lovingly to him as an instrument in his hands. If he is allowed his way, then in less time than it takes to say a Paternoster he will sanctify thee, and thereby give honour to himself more than thou canst do by a hundred years of thy devotions in the two former ways.'

But one day the heavens fall and this happy state ends, without the soul being able to account for it. Meditation becomes simply impossible; aspirations fall flat; the soul is aware only of what has been well called 'a dull hunger for God' and, as says St John of the Cross: 'dwells upon God with a certain painful anxiety, fearing that it is no longer serving him as once it did'. Tauler comments upon the same Dark Night of the senses in a sermon on John 10, 22: 'And it was winter'. Having spoken of the 'winter' of a soul in grievous sin, he goes on: 'But there is yet another winter. This is suffered by a really God-fearing man. He is mindful of God, and loves him, and is careful to avoid all sin. But God seems to have forsaken him, as far as his feelings go:

he is dry, dark and cold, devoid of all heavenly consolation and spiritual sweetness.' Again, preaching on John 16, 7: 'It is expedient for you that I go', he says: 'A time comes when God seems lost and gone . . . a state of intolerable oppression of spirit; the soul is desolate, darkened, disconsolate, for God is veiled from its sight'.

And Tauler explains the new situation thus: 'Must I actually be in darkness? I answer: "Undoubtedly. Thou art never better off than when thou art sunk in the darkness of unknowing. When thou hast given up thy own willing and knowing, then does God enter into thee, and then lights up thy soul with his presence . . . and when he thus comes to thee, he will bring with him everything which thou hast renounced for his sake increased a thousandfold, to be known and enjoyed by thee in a new and all-embracing form."' '

All readers of St John's *Dark Night* know the chapters wherein he deals with the faults of those whom God is about to purify in the Night of the Senses, classifying them under each of the capital sins. Tauler had pointed them out before him, and in language so similar that it is obvious that there is more than mere coincidence involved. In sermons evidently preached to religious, we hear of the spiritually avaricious, the spiritually gluttonous, the proud, the slothful, etc. We meet the people who 'are forever seeking advice, changing their confessors, ever ready to instruct and admonish their neighbours', though they are the first to resent anything of the kind themselves; those who are continually taking up new devotions, and going in for 'fine spiritual talk'. All are there, just the same in Germany as in Spain!

Time goes on, the faithful soul progresses, and anon there comes the other *Night*, that of the spirit. 'The faculty of love in man thirsts for suffering for the sake of the Beloved, however much one's reason may revolt against it. And hence those favoured souls have a longing to suffer. . . . They thirst for the cross of Christ, and to them every day is, in very deed, the feast of Holy Cross. And their longing is satisfied. God casts upon the soul the most awful darkness of woe, the most terrible sense of abandonment'; and Tauler tells us that the soul is thus ascending to God by the shortest way—the straight, sheer path labelled *Nada* (Nothing) in

St John's famous sketch. Like the Carmelite, again, he explains how the soul suffers from the very brightness of the light of God, from its inability to love him as it would, when the strange words of the Dominican Tertiary poet, Michael Field, seem verified:

And I wonder if love so great
Will not keep us forever asunder.

Repeatedly, Tauler bids the soul hold on and be faithful to prayer and self-discipline. 'Real devotion is an interior clinging to God himself, with a soul wholly ready to possess all things and to think of all things just as God does.'

And the end is the transforming union. 'Now God comes and with his finger touches the well-filled vessel of his graces. The soul is now united to God without any intermediary, and loses itself in him; will, love, knowledge, all overflow into God, and are lost in him and made one with him. The eternal God loves himself in this soul, all of whose works are done by him.' For Tauler, as for the Mystical Doctor, it is all summed up in St Paul's words: '*I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me*' (Gal. 2, 10).



POINT OF VIEW

'SOLITARIUS' is indeed to be thanked for his suggestion that contemplatives in the world can find their desert or cell in the midst of the world itself. Now D.B.S. brings the matter right down to the earth on which our feet stand. This writer, a humble male tertiary on whom a measure of domesticity has been thrust, can recognise the authenticity of what D.B.S. writes. But where is to be found the answer to the Martha-Mary conflict? How to fulfil both the duties of state and the call of God to contemplation, which we are told is given in some measure to all?

In passing we may note that Miss H. C. Graef in her *Spiritual Life for All* has much to say that is useful, especially on the question of making time for God. We may think, also, that such an Order as 'The Grail' may be able to give us pointers from their experience in and out of the world. Nor,

for that matter, may it be without purpose that the Duke of Edinburgh's royal mother has dedicated the Greek Order she has founded to both St Martha *and* St Mary.

I venture to suggest that perhaps we should beware of basing our methods too closely on those of contemplatives who are within the cloister, whose time-table life provides conditions we in the world can hardly achieve. May not the contribution we can make be that of developing a form and method of mundane (for lack of a better word) contemplative life? Such a method would be in some degree developed out of the fulfilment of the duties of the lay state: out of, perhaps, the cultivation of an automatic efficiency in one's duties which could free the mind for approach to God: out of ever-increasing 'practice of the presence of God', recollection, and so on—using, in other words, our duties as the beads of a rosary—so that when completely free time can be snatched the best use can be made of it, however short, for 'contemplating God as he is'. But however hard-pressed we may be, there is much comfort in the words of Pope Benedict XV: 'Sanctity consists, properly speaking, in complete conformity to the divine will, *as expressed* in the perfect and persevering accomplishment of the duties particular to each individual'.

Again, it seems, despite much that has been written, that too harsh a distinction ought not to be made between vocal and mental prayer by such people. Surely the tertiaries, for instance, who say our Lady's Office, know that its very lack of variation enables it to serve as the beads in our hands, and to lead us on to a more contemplative approach to God. Did not many medieval monastics do their contemplative prayer while reciting the Office in choir, a separate time for 'meditation' being often unknown among them?

Much has appeared in your pages to assist those who have a special vocation to live almost as hermits within the world or their family circle, or who have leisure to undertake an individual form of lay life, or who are called to enter Secular Institutes. Can your contributors now offer like help to the Martha-Marys of both sexes, who are called by God to give their time and their labour to bread-winning or bread-making for them and theirs, but who also want to present their minds and souls to God along a contemplative way? T.P.F.

TO THE HEIGHTS OF FREEDOM

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

Three books have emerged from France—one already courageously translated into English, the second in process of translation, and the third inviting such a process—which between them mark the path of man from the depths of automatism to the heights of freedom.¹ The flash title of the *Etudes Carmélitaines*—‘*du Robot au Martyr*’—gives a fair indication of the theme treated in diverse ways by all the many contributors to the three volumes.

We live in a Robot age in so many directions that the modern moralist is confronted with a vast set of problems of conditioned, mechanical human actions with which he has hardly begun to grapple. How is he to judge of the culpability or the praiseworthiness of actions that are largely conditioned by interior, psychological or external, social compulsion? The widespread, unnatural and solitary vice among the young may be judged objectively as a serious sin. But is it really heading the unfortunate youth for eternal perdition? The effect of the scientifically organised methods of propaganda or of the merely degenerate forms of public mechanised entertainment and work limits the freedom of choice of the ordinary citizen to such a degree that it appears to be entirely whittled away in vast areas of society. The widespread view of sex and marriage seems to indicate that a great number of authorised unions no longer bear the character of a free choice of the state of holy matrimony. The eternal principles of the natural law remain unalterable but the judgment as to their subjective fulfilment or infringement makes the work of the modern moralist a task of the greatest intricacy and delicacy. Dr Suzy Rousset writes in this volume of *Etudes Carmélitaines* of the young delinquent and the confirmed criminal and of present investigations undertaken in France in relation to objective and subjective justice; and the question of the young delinquent only puts in the limelight a problem that runs through the whole spiritual life of the modern Christian.² Modern technique, this volume points out, has developed to the extent of inventing a mechanical brain; society on the whole

¹ *Limites de l'Humaine*. Being the papers read at the 8th International Congress of Religious Psychology. (*Etudes Carmélitaines*, published by Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

La Chasteté. Problèmes de la Religieuse d'Aujourd'hui (Editions du Cerf). Now being translated in the Religious Life Series (Blackfriars Publications).

New Problems in Medical Ethics, edited by Dom Peter Flood, translated from *Cahiers Laënnec* by Malachy G. Carroll (Mercier; 21s.)

² The problem has arisen again recently in the discussion as to when a murderer is mad.

is dominated by admiration for such techniques so that these man-made robots do in fact tend to dominate their creators and to subject mankind to this technique.

Dr Henri Samson, S.J. (*Etudes Carmélitaines*), shows how the whole biological as well as psychological system of the human frame is conditioned by the habits of growing men and women. The muscles, instead of being the vehicles for the expression of the emotions under the control of the will, can be dominated by nervous troubles, making up by violent movement for a hesitant action, registering quick anger owing to frustration in youth. . . . Mucus and serum which protect the organism from external agents or remove undesirable substances in the blood, express desires and conflicts. . . . It is all very well, says Dr Samson, for an habitual sinner to say after a sincere confession that he will not do it again; but he has to remember that his whole physique is saturated with what the Fathers called 'humours'. How far is he responsible in his subsequent actions; in other words, how far does his will control his physical make-up? Fr Snoek of Louvain, in *New Problems*, discusses this from the point of view of boys and girls and the phenomenon of solitary vice which can be so common. Is it a grave sin? he asks; and he answers that in principle of course it is grave; but it is sometimes brought on by 'inveterate anguish of the Psyche', is feared as a fatality, and the psychological situation requires very sympathetic and delicate handling. He gives some excellent advice on the ways of dealing with different types of those who fall into this sin. But the main point at issue is this: that if interior, psychological disequilibrium can lead to a minimal act of the will and compulsory acts of the Psyche or the physical organism, it is possible to trace some of these phenomena at least to external social situations. The modern world often sets up conditions in which such compulsory action can be easily bred. Abbé Oraison, in *Chasteté*, provides subject for thought in this matter in relation to hormones, Dr Le Moal and Père Larère, in *New Problems*, with reference to homosexuality. It should, perhaps, be added that the problems are, of course, not new; but the scale of environmental influence is far greater than heretofore; and also the science of the psychological and physiological states of men under such influences has been enormously widened if not deepened in the last half-century.

Yet the modern man remains free in essence and there lie before him the heights of human freedom which are described in these volumes and may be summarised under the three heads of Art, Virginity and Martyrdom. M. Stanislaus Fumet introduces the volumes of *Etudes Carmélitaines* with a characteristic essay on *L'Acte d'Art*: 'Even if the artists on the whole are not chaste, it still remains true that their art is a manifestation of the spirit's conquest over the senses. . . .' The artist participates in some way in the free act of the Creator. But to turn to the supernatural freedom

of virginity and martyrdom, we can detect degrees of freedom emerging from the lower regions of compulsion. There is a purely negative freedom, a refusal or even a psychological incapacity to act, and this can scarcely be called freedom at all. A virginity that is established through fear of marital relations has no crown of glory attached to it. Indeed Dr Suzy Rousset, in *Chasteté*, points out the risk of accepting girls who might be called 'natural celibates', and even those who enter religion with the primary aim of preserving their virginity, with the love of God only as a secondary consideration. A Mother General, in the same volume, says that the sisters must realise that God has made man 'sexué', and that everything to do with sex is deeply rooted in their whole organism; and reaching above this they must see that God does not want desiccated, 'dehydrated' hearts. In the Old Testament sterility was a curse, though the author of the first volume shows how this prepared the ground for the Christian ideal of positive virginity.

Positive, dynamic virginity is the fullness of the free act of charity. 'Virginity has its origin in charity and is ordained to it', writes Père Le Guillou in *La Chasteté*, 'in its very finality which turns it into a virtue, towards the "decentration" from self and the union with God, which is charity; one is only chaste through love; virginity is only acceptable and expansive in the service of love. Virginity involves the consecration of the *whole* being to God: it only expresses in a particularly vigorous and sensible manner what charity is in its essence, the presentation of the *whole* man before the *whole* of God.' As an act, then, it is the free and total choice of God alone. In view of the captivity of man in the robot age it can become the great sign and manifestation of man's freedom in the life of charity. In the early Church the virgin was first recognised in her final act of free choice in martyrdom. Brought before the Roman magistrates to confess their allegiance to Christ, the Christian virgins were often subject to licentious attack and would protest that they were already espoused. Tertullian refers to them as being 'betrothed to Christ'. (cf. *La Chasteté*, pp. 53 et sqq.) So that very early in the history of the Church the freedom of virginity was closely associated with this other act of supreme liberty, that of martyrdom.

The last section, then, of the volume of *Etudes Carmélitaines* is concerned with the martyr as showing the final act of man's free will uplifted and strengthened by grace. But again it is the act of love that makes it so: 'The acceptance of death, St Thomas teaches, is not of itself virtuous, but a man can accept death out of the love of charity—he is a martyr. It is thus the sign of a sovereign charity'. (p. 222.) True martyrs are not those who take their own life; and while considering possible exceptions under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, St Augustine and St Thomas after him refused to allow that a virgin could take her own life to preserve her

integrity (pp. 287 et sqq); that might well be an example of those who seem to place their 'virtue' above God himself. Moreover, one of the contributors goes to some length to warn us against the 'martyr of love' who derives a certain satisfaction from suffering, which can even develop into a kind of hankering for death (pp. 330 et sqq). Such people who seem to seek pain and suffering for its own sake do not manifest the perfect sign of true human freedom, but rather a return to some sort of compulsion arising from a psychological maladjustment. The great act of martyrdom by which all mankind was offered freedom was not the act of one who preached suffering and death for its own sake, but rather life, and that more abundantly.

One might ask in this context whether certain martyrs for the faith were not inspired by some type of 'enthusiasm' which had the nature of a compulsion, taken out of themselves by the exultation of the moment. It is possible in certain cases, and the authors of this volume are careful to show where this great act of Christian love and faith is fully and freely engaged. Another question in relation to modern martyrdom might also have been discussed in view of the diabolic methods of breaking down the personality and attacking the very will itself in current methods of torture. This question seems to have been passed by; yet it might have helped considerably in elucidating what is surely a very real problem to Christians when they read the 'confessions' of many men who have undergone the third-degree methods of the Russians.

Nevertheless the general trend of these three volumes seems to point to the fact that though the Christian subjected to all the modern attacks upon his freedom will continue to offer problems to those trying to enlighten and strengthen his conscience, the signs of the virgin and the martyr will serve to raise our eyes above the over-anxious scrutiny of men's hearts and show that the Christian's free act of love does in fact exist in every walk of life.

REVIEWS

THE LETTERS OF SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. Newly translated by Bruno Scott James. (Burns Oates; 42s.)

The English reader will find here some principal sources of his knowledge, whether he be interested in St Bernard's healing of universal and local schisms, his invitation to the Crusade, his war against the heresies of Abelard, his discussion of monastic observance with Peter of Cluny, his urging St Ailred of Rievaulx to write the *Speculum Charitatis*, or a discourse of the love of God like that addressed to Prior Guy and his Carthusian brethren. In a work of over five hundred pages some faults and inaccuracies are to be forgiven. It is easy for the casual reviewer to spend

a few hours picking holes and listing mistakes in any book which has occupied much of a scholar's life and strength. These few paragraphs suppose that readers and the translator himself do not want another bouquet thrown in the path but welcome a serious review and a little constructive criticism.

It would be unjust to compare the English with that of Allison Peers's *Letters of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, for St Teresa's meaning can be preserved in good English far more more easily than St Bernard's. What is important is that we have the letters presented with fair accuracy. It was good to aim at a style neither archaic nor extremely modernised. God is rightly addressed as 'you' rather than 'thou', even though we find the two mixed ('I thank you, Father, . . . that thou hast hidden', etc., p. 221), and the verbs are not always accommodated ('You . . . who judges justly and searches . . .', p. 5, cf. bottom of p. 275).

Three of the letters are given as though yet unpublished. The longest is 391, an invitation to the Crusade. But the text hardly varies from 363 of the old edition. In fact this was a circular letter. Mabillon gave it addressed to the people of Eastern France and Bavaria. Seven separate addresses have long been known, and Dom Jan Leclercq, in the *Revue Mabillon* of this year (p. 7) has added an eighth. It is interesting to find it in our translation addressed to the English, but this does not make it an unpublished text. A shorter letter is n. 257, one of those addressed to Bishop Ulger concerning his troubles at Angers. Neither is this entirely new, for Dom Philbert Schmitz printed it in the *Revue Bénédictine* of 1935 (p. 351). There remains letter 396 concerning monks who wandered after the Crusade. Dom Leclercq has just printed the Latin text in the *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* (1953, p. 141), but Father Scott James was right in calling it unpublished at the time of his translation.

Of special interest are letters 187 to 208, concerning the election of St William to the See of York, for here are eleven of the fourteen letters discovered by Dr C. H. Talbot and printed in the *Cambridge Historical Journal* of 1950.

The translator may have had to hurry over these newly found letters, for the standard of accuracy is below that of the volume as a whole. It is only just to support such a statement by example. Thus in letter 257 to Ulger the Latin of the Berlin MS. mentioned by the translator as his source, 'ut quod non (*fieri* here deleted) potest non fieri quomodo potest componatur', is rendered, 'so that both may be induced in some way or other to do their duty in the matter'. In 198, to Queen Matilda of England, 'ut quem solum debet habere solum sibi retineret assensum', is rendered, 'so that it alone (the chapter) should have the decision to which it alone is entitled'. The chapter has not been mentioned in the sentence at all, but the meaning is, 'that he (the king) should keep to himself the

assent alone, to which alone he is entitled'.

Yet many mistakes of the earlier translator, S. J. Eales, have been corrected. The book should be in every Catholic institution, in the hands of every student of the twelfth century. The many letters hitherto difficult of access, now brought together, new arrangement and historical notes, make the book useful even to those who would read only the original.

JOHN MORSON, O.C.R.

SAINT BERNARD ET LA BIBLE. By P. Dumontier. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

The Scriptures crave to be read and understood in the spirit in which they were made. From such reading affection is drawn and prayer is shaped; a prayer which does not hinder our reading but purifies the mind and restores it to a better understanding of what we read. If we seek God in our reading, all we read works together to us for God and is subdued to the service of Christ. In this way Saint Bernard made the Bible his own: it held an outstanding place in every part of his thought and work. P. Dumontier here sets in detail Saint Bernard's method in the use of Holy Scripture. For him the Bible was God's impatient call to love, a revelation from the heart of God to the heart of man. In showing how Saint Bernard made use of the help of the Fathers, the author makes a very fine analysis of texts. He does not seek to hide the imperfection of Saint Bernard's interpretation: it is compared with that of the Fathers and other writers of the twelfth century, and throughout the book much light is cast on the other Cistercian writers, such as William of Saint-Thierry, Saint Aelred, and Guerric. The chapter on Saint Bernard's biblical style is a masterpiece. The biblical character of his spirituality is dealt with in the last chapter. This book is a very welcome addition to the literature on Saint Bernard, and it cannot be ignored by those who desire a better understanding of the great Cistercian.

A.W.

THE SIGN OF JONAS. By Thomas Merton. (Hollis and Carter; 18s.)

Thomas Merton is almost certainly the only Catholic writer on the spiritual life in the world today whose books have been read by more than a million readers. This fact is both significant and impressive. The readers, be it said, are of widely differing intellectual capacity, yet they share an enthusiasm for Fr Merton's talents in autobiographical writing, for his descriptions of Cistercian life, and in a lesser degree for his exposition of the classical doctrine of Catholic spirituality. His chief assets as a writer lie in a strongly marked individuality of style, and a certain transparent sincerity. His autobiographical work clearly has the wider appeal and is more successful than his expositions of doctrine, which though they are

written with eloquence and clarity break no new ground, are not always theologically adequate, and commonly by-pass the more acute problems inherent in our modern situation.

Fr Merton has written a great deal—perhaps almost too much—during his fifteen or so years of Catholic life, and there are times when one wonders whether superiors have not driven a willing horse too fast and too far. However this may be, the present book shows a manifest growth in spiritual experience, if only because it contains an occasional quiet admission of past erroneous judgments (the world is not so wholly bad as he thought it), and because it does not conceal the tension in him between the individualistic artist and the self-effacing religious. In the main this record of his five years in the Cistercian Abbey of Gethsemane rings true.

Orderly minds may find the book difficult reading, because it has no central theme or argument, since it is the record of the small quiet events which go to make up the life of a Cistercian monk. The casual *catena* of thoughts and feelings, the sublime, the trivial, the humorous, the beautiful follow each other in uncertain sequence. Meditation is followed by details of manual labour; the weather and the landscape are sandwiched between comments on the liturgy, because monastic life is like that: in its diversity and contrast the tension of life is eased and sanity is saved.

Fr Merton has his critics: it would be hard to achieve such popularity as a writer without raising a little envy here and a little doubt there. He has written much he tells us at the orders of his religious superiors, but it is only fair to say that he is not the first writer on the spiritual life to do so. Incidentally, his journal bears a certain resemblance to the famous *Histoire d'une Ame* of Ste Thérèse of Lisieux in its candour and simplicity. He confesses that he has found the external compulsion to write very painful at times, but again numerous professional writers have regarded their craft as something of a servitude and in this Fr Merton is in good company.

Other critics have complained that he preaches a form of religious escapism, that he has got the relation of the 'world' and religion in wrong perspective. The answer, I think, is that it would be a miracle if he had not done so; but after all the distortion is neither so great nor so important as to invalidate the substantial excellence of his work. If the Spirit really breathes where he will, and if the thomist doctrine that contemplation is in the 'normal' way of growth of grace in the soul is even a probable truth, then Fr Merton in his witness to the facts of Cistercian life and to traditional doctrine before so wide a public is doing a work at which it would be hard to cavil. This remains true without prejudice to the larger and more difficult work of qualifying development on the thomist doctrines which still remains to be done. That a Cistercian monk may not feel called upon to take a hand in such an enterprise is in no way surprising. More-

over, as change is the law of life, there is every reason to believe that certain judgments made by Fr Merton, which to a very mature theological mind may seem somewhat naïve, will in time, with him, adjust themselves to the complex realities of human life.

If Fr Merton succeeds in doing all this while at the same time retaining his hold over his large and diverse circle of readers, he may well prove to have been the most widely influential spiritual writer of the day. Meantime, *The Sign of Jonas* is worthy of everyone's attention in some degree, and the final chapter we commend to all as a small masterpiece of descriptive writing and meditative soliloquy.

R. VELARDE

VAUX OF HARROWDEN. A Recusant Family. By Godfrey Anstruther, O.P. (R. H. Johns, Newport, Mon.; 25s.)

If anyone should ask what interest a family history has for readers of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, the best answer would be: 'Read this book and see for yourself'. But as an encouragement to do so, some outline of the reasons for that interest may be attempted.

To begin with, though it is indeed family history, it is also something more. It is more even than a closely documented account of the passion and death of the Catholic faith in an average English midland county. It can be read and appreciated as both of these things, but it can be understood at a deeper level to be a microcosm of a part of England's story, the story of the life of the spirit, of the still undecided battle for her soul. Now Englishmen are practical and pragmatic people, more swayed by ideas if these are embodied in living people than by theories that remain abstract. Hence we feel better able to approach a problem with sympathy and understanding when we can envisage it in human terms. This is true of the Reformation, when men were divided by a conflict of ideas, principally by two opposed concepts of what kind of Church God had founded. These concepts, however, were not at war in a void. Their actions and reactions have been abstracted by historians from the lives lived at various levels, international, national, family and personal, by multitudes of different people. The actual events, choices and changes which confronted actual people are the real stuff of history, and make points of contact with ourselves who likewise know what it is to struggle in daily life with problems half-understood and situations not of our making. History comes alive when it becomes personal, and that is why biographies and historical novels are so popular.

What the insight of a Benson or a Prescott achieves in bringing seemingly forgotten issues to life by depicting them in a historical novel peopled with convincingly imagined characters, Fr Anstruther achieves by exercising similar imaginative insight upon real men and women whose lives and

deaths he has so sympathetically recreated for us that we cannot but share their triumphs and tribulations. The tribulations are more obvious than the triumphs in these pages, for humanly speaking this story is ultimately one of tragedy and eclipse. But it is precisely because the author does not let the wealth of detail he has so patiently assembled and so dexterously knit into a vivid narrative, obscure the significance of his story, that we never forget that 'humanly speaking' is not everything where grace is at work.

But grace presupposes nature, and of human nature, its frailties sometimes setting off other traits of clear sanctity, there is plenty in his rich gallery of portraits. Though relatively well-known priests like Garnet and Gerard rightly occupy much of the picture, it is the figures, hitherto shadowy or unknown, of lay men and women which lend it such distinguished new colour. Not all the staunch recusants among them were saints, nor was the Faith any guarantee of success or happiness in a world of calculated injustice. Yet amidst the deepest shadows flash out again and again glimpses of the long perspectives of God. Even human vision can already distinguish that the tragedy and failure were relative and not absolute. The Faith was never wholly lost in this country as it was, for example, in Scandinavia, where Catholicism has begun again from nothing.

To English homes from which, decade after decade, men and women slipped away to fill more than a score of English religious houses abroad, came the missionary priests to find shelter. Wherever they went Mass was said, and where Mass was said the Faith survived. True, we often cannot trace these Mass-centres or name those who kept the Faith for us. When the penalty of discovery could be death, a secrecy hid them which may remain impenetrable, especially after intervening centuries of neglect and destruction have removed what tangible evidence this underground Church left of its presence. Much of the story of our Church will remain known only to God till the end of time, but not all the evidence has perished. It lies scattered in fragments, awaiting historians to piece it together with the loving patience Fr Anstruther shows. His detailed narrative, securely based on an extensive range of original sources, gives colour and emphasis and telling detail to the general picture we have of life in England under persecution. Such a documented study helps to explain how, despite the worst that force and fraud could do, while there were families like the Vauxes and the Treshams and others less known but deserving no less honour, the Mass could not fail. Its preservation is the hidden theme of this absorbing book.

It should deepen our love for the precious heritage of the Mass to learn to what heroism ordinary English men and women could rise in its defence. Even our seemingly so indifferent world might reflect that without devoted laypeople to shelter and finance them at risk of their own lives and fortunes, all the priests in England could have been rounded up in a year and the

Mass utterly suppressed. Further, it was these lay helpers who, by the openings they created, largely made possible the apostolate of the priests to the lapsed and to non-Catholics. If we are ever tempted to consider the lay apostolate of today a new-fangled or unproved missionary method we might ponder the parallel.

In paying tribute to the author for what is obviously the fruit of years of devoted labour, let us couple with him a publisher who has already given us *Stonor* and who has the courage of his conviction that books like that and the present one will win Catholic readers by the proud appeal of their story and non-Catholics by their historical interest and freshness. Historians of the period would like a better index than we are given, but the general reader will not find its shortcomings spoil his enjoyment of a stirring story beautifully told.

DAVID ROGERS

THE FURTHER JOURNEY, by Rosalind Murray (Harvill; 12s. 6d.), provides a penetrating sequel to the author's first Catholic book, *The Good Pagan's Failure*. In the first book she had written of her first impact with the Church from her 'good pagan' surroundings. Now she writes, after ten years as an educated convert, of the hard but fruitful remoulding of her life into a Catholic form. There were some strange paradoxes to be resolved; for example, it is of interest that the sacramental Presence at first appealed to her while she could not attach any importance to the historic Christ, and yet at the same time she was drawn to an over-spiritualised ideal of the Christian which had more in common with Plato than with Christ. Only after these years has the whole integrity of the Christian person become a reality to her with the necessary connection with the sacraments and the imperfection and weaknesses of those who make up the Mystical Body. The convert must plunge into the purifying waters perhaps for some long time after having abandoned the pagan humanism. There are many 'deeps' that will cleanse in the end though they seem at first repellent—such as 'the good Catholic', the magical attitude to certain religious practices, the unedifying Catholic who 'falls short in just those virtues which they (the non-Catholics) prize most highly: truthfulness, honesty, integrity, public spirit, the essential virtues of the humanist morality'. All these 'practical barriers' come eventually to be seen in the true perspective of the last supernatural goal of man and play their part in widening and deepening the life of the generous convert. Miss Murray rightly considers that her own experiences and difficulties are to some extent typical of the educated Catholic who comes from the milieu of what she calls the 'Yogi Pagan'. For this reason her book will appeal particularly to the non-Catholic who is puzzled by the Catholic Church and the behaviour of many of her members and also to the convert who is confronted by these common problems that accompany the intelligent person as he is assimilated into the body of Christ.

C.P.